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Testimony of Rep. David Boyer introducing

## **LD 726, An Act to Protect Municipalities' Investment in Law Enforcement Officers**

*Before the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice*

March 10, 2025

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Hasenfus and esteemed members of the Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety, my name is Rep. David Boyer and I am proud to introduce LD 726, An Act to Protect Municipalities' Investment in Law Enforcement Officers,

I am here today representing the interests of small towns like Mechanic Falls, Poland, and countless others across Maine that are struggling to maintain their police departments under the weight of an unfair system. I urge you to support this bill, which increases the reimbursement payments required when a governmental entity hires a full-time law enforcement officer within five years of their graduation from the Maine Criminal Justice Academy (MCJA) or the Indian Police Academy at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center, when that officer's training was originally funded by another governmental entity. This change is a critical step toward leveling the playing field for small communities and ensuring fairness in how we support our law enforcement agencies.

Under the current law, when a larger town or city hires away an officer we've invested in training, they are required to reimburse us only a portion of the training costs. But that amount is simply not enough to offset the financial and operational burden left behind. Small towns like ours are footing the bill to send recruits to the MCJA—covering tuition, equipment, and often wages during training—only to see them lured away by bigger departments shortly after graduation. These larger entities, with deeper pockets and more enticing opportunities, face little consequences for poaching our officers, while we're left to start over, again and again.

Let me paint the picture for you. In Mechanic Falls alone, we've lost at least four officers in the past year—most within months of graduating from the MCJA. Each time this happens, our taxpayers lose thousands of dollars, our remaining officers lose morale, and our department loses manpower. It's not just a monetary hit; it's a physical and mental strain on the team left behind, forced to stretch thin while we scramble to recruit and train someone new. This revolving door is unsustainable, and it's driving small departments to the breaking point. Just look at Mexico—

they recently shut down their police department entirely, in part because of these same hiring challenges. How many more towns will follow if we don't act?

This bill addresses that inequality by raising the reimbursement costs for hiring entities. It sends a clear message: if you want to benefit from the investment we've made in our officers, you need to fairly compensate the community that got them there. This isn't about punishing anyone—it's about accountability and protecting the resources of small towns that can't afford to be training grounds for wealthier departments.

This bill is a practical, common-sense solution that strengthens our ability to sustain local law enforcement without overburdening taxpayers or driving departments to collapse.

Thank you for your time and attention to this pressing matter. I respectfully ask for your support in passing this bill and, if possible, exploring additional measures to protect small departments from being exploited. Together, we can correct these inequities and ensure that every community—big or small—has a fair shot at keeping the officers they train.